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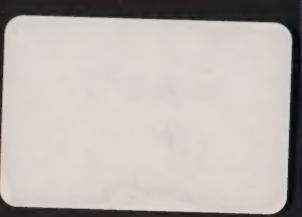
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In "Conferences"

LAND USE CONFERENCE *Proceedings*  
" DECEMBER 12-13 "  
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WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED WITH PLANNING

N.R. Richards



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# ONTARIO SOIL AND CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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## WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED WITH PLANNING

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(Presented to Land Use Conference, December 12, 1972)

The theme of this conference "Planning for the Future" is highly appropriate. I commend the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food for bringing this group together. It provides an opportunity for those associated with agriculture and other users of land to exchange ideas and pool their views about resource use.

In my view one of the pressing problems with which we must wrestle is how to shape the attitudes of people about the use of resources and how they relate to the environment in which people live. It seems to me that we can point with pride and satisfaction to the progress that has already been made in this decade in creating a concern in people's mind about the deterioration of the environment. The decade of the sixties closed with unprecedented concern expressed about the quality of the air we breath, the water we drink and the land we till. As we move along in the decade of the seventies it is apparent that both government and people are responding to the warning sounded by all facets of the media about the need to restore the quality of the environment. We can expect similar success in educating people to a better understanding about the use of resources and the democratic processes involved in changing our attitudes about planning, the need for it, and its implementation.

People will adjust their attitude if the need for change is well communicated to them. More than twenty years ago I joined the department with which I am again associated. One of the first projects established in 1951 was a series of soil erosion run-off plots. Some of you will recall the great anxiety and concern that prevailed in the mid 30's, the 40's, and 50's about

the loss of soil through wind and water erosion. The significance of that concern found expression in the establishment of the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, the PFRA of Canada, and the Conservation Council of Ontario, to cite but a few agencies. After a break of ten years, during which period I was not intimately associated with the projects in soil science, I returned to the department to find a different concept towards controlling erosion losses and practices such as strip cropping are not recommended.

I make reference to this not to suggest that soil erosion is no longer a problem. It is and will continue to be so long as we use land for its priority function, the production of food and fibre. The point I make is that out of our anxiety about the loss of soil and a reduction in its suitability to produce food an action program emerged. Soil and crop management programs were developed, recommended, and adopted by those who use the land. Said in another way, farmers, governments and researchers became more conscious about the problem and did something about it.

How does this relate to the subject to which I have been invited to speak - What Can Be Accomplished With Planning? I make reference to it because in my view we have been neither effective nor successful in convincing our people about the need for planning for an orderly use and development of our land resources. It seems to me that what we are really looking for and expecting from planning is a way to manage land, air, water, minerals, vegetation, wildlife and all the related matters of human society in a way which cuts through the mass of single purpose plans and single and cross-purpose jurisdictions. Land is an important part of the environment, and at this conference as we single it out for attention we again recognize its priority significance.

We might well ask ourselves where does agriculture fit in the hierarchy of uses for which land is required? There are those who hold a view that with

present patterns under which the land market operates, agriculture is at a disadvantage when it competes with other higher-value uses. As a consequence, it has low priority. Competitive demands for land are especially strong in the vicinity of urban centres. Although some may take the view that agriculture in this province may not survive, the position taken in this paper is (1) there will continue to be an agriculture in Ontario and (2) information should be brought together to indicate where, within the province, agriculture should be most appropriately located. Having taken the foregoing position, the writer hastens to recognize that it implies the development of a land policy that will assure the continuance of agriculture in Ontario.

Two of the speakers on this program have reviewed the requirements of land for agriculture and for urban growth. Land is required for other purposes such as: for recreation, for transport systems, for incorporation of wastes and for the development of sand and gravel resources and other building materials. There is a growing requirement for land to accommodate people who choose to live in the country and not necessarily use resources to produce food and fibre. This particular use will likely become increasingly more important and really creates an "inactive" use category as far as agricultural production programs are concerned.

Many studies have been conducted and recommendations made to plan the use of land resources for agriculture. Recently, a study commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Canada Department of Regional Economic Expansion, attempted to identify and quantify the demands that will be placed on the supply of agricultural land in the future. Identification of the salient factors will facilitate the formulation of agricultural land use policies to ensure the adequacy of future food supplies and guide Ontario's rural development programs. The objectives of the study

were:

- 1) to provide the inputs necessary to decide which areas be committed to agriculture;
- 2) to identify the key factors affecting agricultural land use and the direction of change over the next twenty years;
- 3) to determine the interactions between agriculture and the environment; and
- 4) to suggest priorities and to identify the policy issues and their means of implementation.

The study will undoubtedly provide much awaited and needed information about where it is most feasible to "designate" land for agricultural use.

Early in October, the government of Ontario released two study reports dealing with the Niagara Fruit Belt opening the way for public involvement in the development of long range plans for preserving this important natural resource. A recommendation to the Provincial Government in a recent report (1) is as follows: "If the Federal Government acts to prevent the sale of imported tender fruit at distress prices, the Provincial Government should adopt land zoning policies that will allow the production of tender fruit to continue. Urban sprawl, which has absorbed 5000 acres of fruit land in the past 10 years through building and speculation, should be stopped in fruit production areas if the tender fruit industry is to continue".

The second report (2) was prepared by a group of planners and geographers working with the Regional Development Branch of the former Department of Treasury and Economics (now Ministry of Treasury, Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs) and was co-ordinated by Professor L.O. Gertler.

(1) Alternatives for the Ontario Tender Fruit Industry; E.L. Chudleigh, Ontario Food Council, September, 1972.

(2) Niagara Escarpment Study Fruit Belt Report, August, 1968.

The report recommends that the province should assume responsibility for preparing a regional plan for the Fruit Belt and the terms of reference for the regional plan should include three specific requirements, one of which is that a maximum amount of the tender fruit soils be preserved for agriculture.

The Hon. William A. Stewart commented on the significance of the two reports as follows:

"In short, these two important reports -- and I cannot over-emphasize their importance to everyone in Ontario, call for action, immediate action, by the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario and the local elected representatives as well as the growers and processors of tender fruit in the Niagara Peninsula. The studies clearly set forth the serious state of the industry and the threat that urban sprawl represents. Therefore, we are making these reports available for the consideration and discussion which should result in appropriate action being taken to preserve this great Ontario natural resource."

Victor Chanasyk, Principal Consultant, Victor Chanasyk Associates, makes the following interesting observation in the Haldimand-Norfolk Environmental Appraisal (1).

"It is only in very recent years that the full environmental implications of world population increase, urban and industrial expansion and high consumption of resources and goods, has been fully understood. Recognition of this problem must necessarily be based in understanding that the world environment works as a closed system with not as much latitude for interference in environmental processes as had been commonly assumed.

The Haldimand-Norfolk Study area represents, within limits, a microcosm similar to the global system of resources and natural processes. It, too, has some aspects of a closed system and even more so than other regions for many of its resources are relatively unique and it cannot depend upon neighbouring regions for those it does not possess or cultivate.

While the terms of reference did not include the development of new analytical methods, I am sure you will find this report represents a sensitive search into critical resources and phenomena which will be helpful to you in the formulation of a regional planning strategy."

Each of the foregoing reports emphasize the importance, urgency and need for planning. Important as planning is, a more pressing requirement is to

(1) The Haldimand-Norfolk Environmental Appraisal, Volume I, Ontario Ministry of Treasury, Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs, Victor Chanasyk, July, 1970.

consider and develop policies and regulations required to implement a plan. It is apparent that land resources are required for several purposes, one of which is agriculture. It is scarcely necessary to remind this audience that agriculture must not take the view that under all circumstances the production of food and fibre takes precedence over all other uses. I sometimes think agriculture might be criticized for taking a rather inflexible attitude in this regard. For example, the importance of sand, gravel and other building materials is tremendously important and the development of these resources usually occurs interspersed in an agricultural use.

In 1969, the aggregate production in the Toronto-Centred Region, amounted to some 50 million tons or 12.8 tons per capita. Three-quarters of the production was derived from surficial sand and gravel deposits. The remainder was supplied from quarries. Production of sand and gravel in the Toronto-Centred Region in the eleven years from 1958-1969 was doubled while the population increased by 44.7 per cent. It is obvious that an expected 100 per cent increase in population in the next thirty years will place heavy demands on the then remaining resources. A ready supply of aggregate to the building industry is of economic importance and a benefit to the public in general. It should be recognized by land use planners that although the aggregate resources are plentiful, they are not unlimited. The planner would undoubtedly consider development of aggregate deposits a higher priority than agricultural requirements.

For a case study in planning, let us take a look at an area in Ontario with the following characteristics: agriculture is well established; contains within its limits a city of 100,000 people; contains extensive deposits of sand and gravel; and is traversed by a four lane highway; Canada Land Inventory

data is available and will provide background information about the capability of the resources for agriculture, recreation, and forestry. Let us further assume that there may be less socio economic information available than the planners would like to have, but because of a pressing need, a plan is developed using whatever information is available at the present time.

In the suggested case study area, and such a situation can be found in several areas in Ontario south of the Precambrian Shield, one would expect that a planner would be faced with the problem of reconciling competing claims for part of the land surface. Since the vast majority of land in Ontario is held in private ownership, the existing owners might reason that they have first claim and the new users should prove that the community will benefit if the use of the land in question is changed. A more likely circumstance would be that if the land is required for use different to agriculture its market value would be greatly increased and the owner would be ready and willing to sell it.

It is reasonable to expect that a planner will be required to designate land for agriculture, for expansion of a city of 100,000 people, and for parks and recreational facilities. Land will also be required for transport requirements. The planner will undoubtedly recognize the need for and importance of developing the aggregate resources.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that land is required for several uses. No one use will occupy a number one priority under all circumstances. In my view, planning will provide an inventory of the resources and should indicate a priority through which they are released for the several uses. Agriculture cannot lay claim to all the high quality land. If, for example, only Class I and Class II land adjoins a city and land is required for urban expansion, then the enlargement must take place on the high quality land. By

similar reasoning, if high quality land adjoins a lake, natural or artificial, it should be used for recreational purposes. If, however, there is an alternative between land of different qualities, I submit high quality land should be preserved for use for the production of food and fibre. I believe planners have paid too little attention to the quality of land in committing it to a recommended use. As a general guideline, a policy that releases land from agriculture in descending order of quality has merit. Wise planning of aggregate resources will allow the utilization of existing resources with the provision of course that the areas be rehabilitated for other uses when the aggregates have been removed.

Land use planning requires a continuing knowledge of our land resources and for what purpose they are required. More important, however, is the compilation and appraisal of the present regulatory powers and administrative responsibilities that control land and resource use. It is in the latter that a deficiency exists. Planning may well lay out what should be done but falls short of establishing a policy as to how we can best use the resource for the future and the administrative machinery required to implement the plan.

Planning alone will not regulate the use of land. There is ample evidence to support the need for regulatory measures to guide the orderly development of our land resources for the future. Agriculture will continue to be an important use of the rural space but it will exist along with several and expanding other uses. It is becoming increasingly apparent that land policy must recognize the interface between agriculture and other uses. It would appear that the planning profession has been more concerned about the difficulties of urban development rather than the broader question of national and provincial land use policy.

What form policy must take remains to be resolved. Agriculture rightly concerns itself about loss of resources and is justified in taking the view that resources should not be lost to the production of food unless we are certain they will not be required for that purpose. At this point in time we cannot be certain. One cannot be optimistic about the hope for an effective land policy until some solution is found for the compensation and betterment problem for those who are required to accept a particular use for a privately owned resource.

It is not uncommon for uncontrolled urban sprawl to spread into the rural areas with the consequent demand for new schools and other services. The inevitable result is higher taxation and decay of the farming community.

If land is to remain in agriculture near our large urban centres and is to be farmed properly, assurance of tax stability is a prerequisite. Immediately the tax level threatens to become too high, the land is either forced into idleness, condemned to exploitation farming or broken up for sale in residential parcels. It is quite possible that the key to tax stability for agricultural land lies in establishing a uniform assessment base for farm land irrespective of where it is located.

The question of whether a land owner can do what he wants with his property is a very basic one. The city dweller accepts certain zoning laws. The rural land owner accepts some controls but revolts at the thought that anyone other than himself should be the judge of whether or not he may sell his property for a changed land use. Before a zoning concept is acceptable, a compensation and betterment scheme for freezing land in a particular use must be explored. To assure an agriculture for the future, and to reserve high quality land for that purpose, a policy that makes it incumbent upon the new use to show cause why the land should be diverted from agriculture, should be explored.

#### SUMMARY

In my view it is apparent that the time has come to synthesize information that is available into a workable land resource use plan. I am quite aware that there may not be as much information as the planners would like to have. The need is too pressing to delay longer.

The first prerequisite, of course, if anything is to be accomplished from planning for agriculture, is to make a very basic assumption that there will be an agricultural industry in Ontario. Having made, and I hope accepted this assumption as fact, accomplishment from planning will depend on

- a) Where agriculture is located.

To answer this requirement, the province would designate areas suitable for agriculture. The decision as to what areas will be preserved for agriculture will of course make full use of all existing inventory and related information.

- b) Developing Plan for Resource Use.

In developing a resource use plan, policy and regulations are required that will make it possible for the plan to be effective.

For example:

(i) If land is designated for agricultural use, a policy is required to establish ownership of land. At the present time, most of the land used for agriculture is held in private ownership. Will this continue?

(ii) If land is designated for agricultural use, what measures should be provided to compensate for specifying a particular use on privately owned land? Consideration might be given to relief through taxation and assessment and land assessed for agricultural use according to its suitability for that purpose irrespective of location.

- (iii) If land is designated for agricultural use, what mechanism is required to permit a change from that use? Let us consider a policy that will make it incumbent upon the new use to show cause for change.
- (iv) The latter (iii) of course implies the creation of an authority at the provincial level that would have the oversight and responsibility to regulate the use of land for the province. Accomplishments from planning will depend upon our ability to formulate and activate policies and regulations to implement a plan.





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